

United States Senate

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June 28, 2011

The Honorable Herb Kohl
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kohl and Ranking Member Brownback:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the annual restrictions on United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) use of appropriated funds to inspect horses at, or in transit to, domestic processing facilities. In September 2009, I wrote to the Senate Appropriations Committee urging the inclusion of language in the final Fiscal Year 2010 Agriculture Appropriations Bill which directed the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct an investigation on the status of horse welfare in the United States since the cessation of horse slaughter operations in 2007.

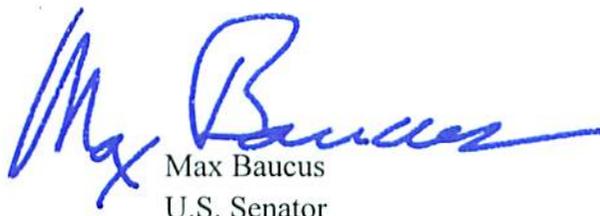
As you know, GAO just released the report *Horse Welfare: Action Needed to Address Unintended Consequences from Cessation of Domestic Slaughter*. As expected, it revealed multiple challenges. For one, GAO's analysis reveals that U.S. horses are being transported longer distances to be slaughtered -- to places where they are not covered by U.S. humane slaughter protections.

The GAO analysis also revealed multiple unintended consequences due to cessation of slaughter in the U.S. The change in policy has completely changed the domestic horse processing market and has led to an increase of exports in Mexico and Canada. GAO's report discovered U.S. horse exports to Mexico for slaughter increased 660 percent from 2006 to 2010, and horse sales and prices have decreased in the U.S. As a result overall horse welfare has decreased, putting a strain on state and local government, tribal, and animal welfare organization resources. Furthermore, cases of horse abandonment, abuse, and neglect have increased.

Animal welfare laws have become more stringent over the past 20 years, as many have begun to realize how important it is to treat animals humanely. I firmly believe that animals should be treated in a humane and decent manner; and because of that belief GAO's report must be used to reexamine the annual restriction Congress imposes on domestic horse processing facilities. It is imperative that we find a way to humanely deal with unwanted horses, and stringent regulation of domestic horse slaughter facilities should remain an option.

As the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Committee begins work on the Fiscal Year 2012 Agriculture Appropriations Bill, I urge you to use the GAO analysis and reconsider the flawed policy which has had negative consequences on rural America and many horses welfare.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Max Baucus". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Max Baucus
U.S. Senator